

Statement of Peter Neffenger
Administrator, Transportation Security Administration
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Before the
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Transportation Security
October 8, 2015

Good afternoon Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Rice, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on my vision for evolving the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

Since its creation following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, TSA has played an invaluable role in protecting the traveling public. Fourteen years after the 9/11 attacks, we face threats more dangerous than at any time in the recent past. Terrorist groups and aspiring violent extremists, inspired by messages of hatred and violence, remain intent on striking our Nation's aviation system as well as other transportation modes. The threat is decentralized, diffuse, and quite complex.

These persistent and evolving threats are TSA's most pressing challenge and require an intense and sustained focus on our security missions. We remain deeply committed to ensuring that TSA remains a high-performing, risk-based intelligence-driven counterterrorism organization. We are working diligently to ensure we recruit, train, develop, and lead a mission-ready and highly-capable workforce, placing a premium on professional values and personal accountability. Further, we will pursue advanced and innovative capabilities that our mission requires to deter, detect, and disrupt threats to our Nation's transportation systems, with a clear understanding that we must continue to optimize today's capabilities while envisioning future methods of achieving success.

I am intently focused on leading TSA strategically, developing and supporting our workforce, and investing appropriately, to deliver on our vital security mission.

Improving Aviation Screening Operations

My highest priority for TSA is determining root causes and implementing solutions to address the recent covert testing of TSA's checkpoint operations and technology conducted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG). I was greatly disturbed by TSA's failure rate on these tests, and have met with the Inspector General on several occasions to better understand the nature of the failures and the scope of the corrective actions needed.

Screening operations are a core mission of TSA. In FY 2014, our officers screened approximately 660 million passengers and nearly 2 billion carry-on and checked bags. Through their diligent daily efforts, our officers prevented over 180,000 dangerous and/or prohibited items, including over 2,200 firearms, from being carried onto planes. In addition, our workforce vetted a daily average of six million air passengers against the U.S. Government's Terrorist Screening Database, preventing those who may wish to do us harm from boarding aircraft, and conducting enhanced screening of passengers and their baggage prior to allowing them to board an aircraft. In conjunction with these screening efforts, and using intelligence-driven analysis, TSA's Federal Air Marshals also protected thousands of flights. To ensure compliance with aviation security requirements, in FY 2014 TSA Inspectors completed over 1,054 airport inspections, nearly 18,000 aircraft operator inspections, and almost 3,000 foreign air carrier inspections to ensure compliance with aviation security requirements. Still, as recent and prior

testing shows, we must continue to formulate solutions that will enhance our effectiveness at checkpoint screening operations.

It is important to acknowledge that the OIG covert tests, as a part of their design, focused on a discrete segment of TSA's myriad capabilities of detecting and disrupting threats to aviation security. TSA conducts similar, more extensive testing that is part of a deliberate process designed to defeat and subsequently improve our performance, processes, and screening technologies. TSA's covert testing program, along with the OIG's covert testing, provides invaluable lessons learned, highlighting areas in which the agency needs improvement in detecting threats. Such testing is an important element in the continual evolution of aviation security.

As we pursue solutions to the challenges presented by recent and on-going covert testing, there are several critical concepts that must be in place. TSA must ensure that its value proposition is well defined, clearly communicated, understood and applied across the entire workforce and mission enterprise. From my first day on the job, I have made it clear that we are first and foremost a security organization. Our mission is to deter, detect, and disrupt threats, and we must ensure every officer, inspector, air marshal, and member of our agency remains laser-focused on this mission. In addition, we must ensure the appropriate measures of effectiveness are in place to drive an institutional focus on the primary security objectives for all modes of transportation, and renewed emphasis on aviation measures.

We have demonstrated our ability to efficiently screen passengers: however, it is clear that we now must improve our effectiveness. By focusing on the basic fundamentals of security screening, and by readjusting the measurements of success to focus on security rather than speed, and by measuring what we value most, we can adjust the institutional focus and adapt the culture

to deliver success. TSA must adopt a culture of operational evolution, one that constantly questions assumptions, plans, and processes, and is able to rapidly field new concepts of operation, performance standards and capabilities, particularly given the persistent and adaptive enemy we face.

To drive these important changes, it is essential to understand and assess appropriately the effectiveness of our aviation security enterprise, to rigorously pursue initiatives to quickly close capability and security gaps, and employ our own covert testing and vulnerability assessments. Delivering an effective security system and earning the confidence of the traveling public will come only through competence, disciplined performance, successful results, and professionalism. These imperatives are essential to address the immediate challenges, and more broadly, to accomplish the important mission entrusted to TSA.

In late May, in response to the OIG initial findings, TSA developed and implemented an immediate action plan built on its understanding of the known vulnerabilities in checkpoint operations. Consisting of dozens of individual actions, it was designed to:

- 1) ensure leadership accountability;
- 2) improve alarm resolution;
- 3) increase effectiveness and deterrence;
- 4) increase threat testing to sharpen officer performance;
- 5) strengthen standard operating procedures;
- 6) improve the Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) system;
- 7) deploy additional resolution tools; and
- 8) improve human factors, including enhanced training and operational responses.

Scheduled for completion in March 2016, TSA is actively engaged in implementing this plan of action and provides regular updates to the Secretary of Homeland Security as well as frequent updates to the Congress.

There are a number of immediate actions that have been completed, including the following: 1) requiring screening leadership at each airport to oversee AIT operations to ensure compliance with standard procedures; 2) requiring each officer to complete initial video-based training to reinforce proper alarm resolution conversations; 3) conducting leadership and officer same-day debriefs for threat inject testing and lessons learned; and 4) performing daily operational exercises and reinforcement of proper pat down procedures at least once per shift to ensure optimal TSO performance.

Secretary Johnson's Ten-Point Plan

In addition to the TSA action plan, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson directed a series of actions, which in cooperation with TSA, constituted a ten-point plan to address these findings. TSA is now working aggressively to accomplish these actions. The plan includes the following:

- Briefing all Federal Security Directors at airports nationwide on the OIG's preliminary test results to ensure leadership awareness and accountability. This was completed in May and continues regularly. In September, I convened the leadership of TSA -- from across the agency and in every mission area -- to discuss our progress, to clearly convey my expectations, and to outline my vision for the evolution of our counterterrorism agency.

- Training every Transportation Security Officer (TSO) and supervisor to address the specific vulnerabilities identified by the OIG tests. This training also is intended to reemphasize the value and underscore the importance we place on the security mission. The training will reemphasize the threat we face, the design of our security system, integrating technology with human expertise, the range of tools we employ to detect threats, and the essential role our officers perform in resolving alarms. Fundamentally, this training is intended to explain the “why” behind our renewed and intense focus on security effectiveness. We are also training supervisors and leaders to ensure they appreciate and support the shift in emphasis. Most important, we are asking our supervisors to recognize their critical role in supporting our officers’ renewed focus on alarm resolution. This training began May 29, 2015 and was recently completed at the end of September 2015.
- Increasing manual screening measures, including reintroducing hand-held metal detectors to resolve alarms at the checkpoint. This has been underway since mid-June and reinforces our ability to detect the full range of threats.
- Increasing the use of random explosives trace detection, which also started in mid-June, enhancing detection capabilities to a range of threat vectors.
- Re-testing and re-evaluating screening equipment to measure current performance standards. We are retesting the systems in the airports tested by the Inspector General and assessing performance of the field systems against those in the labs to ensure optimal performance. This testing, which began in June and is ongoing, will help us to more fully understand and strengthen equipment performance across the enterprise.

- Assessing areas where screening technology equipment can be enhanced. This includes new software, new operating concepts, and technology upgrades in collaboration with our private sector partners.
- Evaluating the current practice of including non-vetted populations in expedited screening. We continue to take steps to ensure that we have a more fully vetted population of travelers exposed to screening in our expedited lanes. For example, as of September 12th, the practice of Managed Inclusion-2 is no longer used in daily operations.
- Revising TSA's standard operating procedures to include using TSA supervisors to help resolve situations at security checkpoints. On June 26, 2015, TSA began field testing new standard operating procedures at six airports. Lessons learned will be incorporated and deployed nation-wide. This procedure is intended to ensure appropriate resolution techniques are employed in every situation.
- Continuing covert testing to assess the effectiveness of these actions. For each test, there must be a same-day debrief with the workforce of outcomes and performance along with immediate remediation actions. Expansion of our testing also enhances officer vigilance.
- Finally, we have responded vigorously by establishing a team of TSA and other DHS officials to monitor implementation of these measures and report to the Secretary and me every two weeks. These updates have been ongoing since June.

Root Cause Assessment

DHS and TSA are also committed to resolving the root causes of these test failures. A diverse team of DHS leaders, subject matter experts, as well as officers and leaders from the

frontline workforce are examining the underlying problems resulting in our performance failures and will make recommendations on system-wide solutions for implementations across the agency.

The team's initial conclusion is that the screening effectiveness challenges noted by the Inspector General were not merely a performance problem to be solved solely by retraining our officers. Officer performance is but one among many of the challenges. TSA frontline officers have repeatedly demonstrated during their annual proficiency evaluations that they have the knowledge and the skill to perform the screening mission well. Nor was this principally a failure of the AIT technology. These systems have greatly enhanced TSA's ability to detect and disrupt new and evolving threats to aviation. AIT technology continues to perform to specification standards when maintained and employed properly, and we continue to improve its detection capabilities.

The challenge can be succinctly described as a set of multi-dimensional factors that have influenced the conduct of screening operations, creating a disproportionate focus on screening operations efficiency rather than security effectiveness. These challenges range across six dimensions: leadership, technology, workforce performance, environmental influences, operating procedures, and system design.

Pressures driven by increasing passenger volume, an increase in checkpoint screening of baggage due to fees charged for checked bags as well as inconsistent or limited enforcement of size requirements for hand-carried bags and the one bag plus one personal item (1+1) standard¹ create a stressed screening environment at airport checkpoints. The challenges also include the

¹ The Aircraft Operator Standard Security Program, Dated October 21, 2013, requires, with some exceptions for crewmembers, medical assistance items, musical instruments, duty free items, and photographic equipment, that the accessible property for individuals accessing the sterile area be limited to one bag plus one personal item per passenger (e.g., purse, briefcase, or laptop computer).

range of complex procedures that we ask our officers to employ, resulting in cognitive overload and personnel not properly employing the technology or a specific procedure. The limitations of the technology, the systems detection standards, TSA officers' lack of training on equipment limitations, and procedures that failed to resolve the alarms appropriately all undermined our ability to effectively screen, as noted by the Inspector General's report.

A critical component of the problem was confusing messages on the values of the institution, as expressed in the metrics used to assess effectiveness and leadership performance. As noted, a prior focus on measures that emphasized reduced wait times and organizational efficiency powerfully influenced screening performance as well as organizational culture. As a result, across TSA, leaders' and officers' organizational behavior emphasized efficiency outcomes and a pressure to clear passengers quickly, at the risk of not diligently resolving alarms. The combined effect of these many variables produced the performance reported by the Office of the Inspector General.

Implementing Solutions

Solutions to the challenges facing TSA will require a renewed focus on the agency's security mission, a commitment to right-sizing and resourcing TSA to effectively secure the aviation enterprise, and an industry commitment to incentivizing vetting of passengers as well as creating conditions that can decrease the volume and contents of bags presented for screening in airports.

For TSA, we must renew our focus on the fundamentals of security, thereby asking our officers and leaders to strike a new balance between security effectiveness and line efficiency, to field and diligently perform appropriate resolution procedures and to close technology and

performance gaps. We need our managers and supervisors to support our officers when they perform their difficult daily mission. As we move forward, we are guided by a principled, strategic approach, with specific projects already underway to advance our goal of ensuring we deliver on our mission to deter, detect, and disrupt threats to aviation.

This principled approach extends beyond the immediate findings identified in the OIG's covert test of checkpoint operations. This approach also informs our strategy and ability as an agency to systematically evolve operations, workforce development, and capability investment, now and in the future. We will systematically review the prior findings of OIG and GAO reports as well as other sources of analysis that can inform security effectiveness.

Redefine Value Proposition

First, TSA is in the process of ensuring our focus on security effectiveness is well defined and applied across the entire workforce and mission space. Our "Mission Essentials – Threat Mitigation" course, being provided to every officer by the end of September, is our initial step. We will follow this initial effort with a range of initiatives to convey these priorities to leaders and officers using additional tools, such as a statement of the Administrator's Intent, the National Training Plan, and in our workforce messaging. Redefining our values as an agency by focusing on threat mitigation and improving TSO awareness and knowledge of the threat will provide a new and acute mission focus. Resolving every alarm, with discipline, competence, and professionalism are the values we are emphasizing to the workforce. From my initial field visits, I can report that our officers are hearing, understanding, and applying this new approach.

Communicate New Standards and Expectations

To communicate these new standards, TSA's Office of Intelligence and Analysis is pursuing an information sharing project to expand and ensure standardized information and intelligence sharing to frontline officers. Expanding the reach of the threat information provided to the field, enhancing our officers' awareness and understanding of the threat and the critical role they play in interdicting these threats creates ownership and a greater commitment to ensuring security procedures are followed.

Align Measures of Effectiveness to Standards and Expectations

TSA's Office of Security Operations is examining and revising the current Management Objectives Report to rebalance the field leaders' scorecard with security effectiveness measures in addition to some preserved efficiency data. We are operating on the premise that what we measure are the organizational objectives to which our field leaders will pay close attention. We expect the first iteration of our new measures to be in the field by early October 2015.

Design System to Achieve Desired Outcome

The aviation security system must interdict the full range of threats on the Prohibited Items List and evolving threats that require our immediate action. Our concept of operations review project, run by the Operations Performance and Mission Analysis Divisions, is further identifying system wide gaps and vulnerabilities and how to ensure the traveling public is exposed to our mission essential detection capabilities when transiting the screening checkpoint. The results of this analysis may lead to a range of recommended improvements, from clarification of pat down procedures to fielding decisions for new technologies.

Eliminate Gaps and Vulnerabilities in Achieving Desired End State

Our work in analyzing the root causes has identified a range of vulnerabilities in TSA; however, there is no single office or accountable official charged with systemically tracking our vulnerability mitigation efforts. Centralizing these activities under a single official should drive systemic research, development, and fielding of new capabilities. Our TSA Office of the Chief Risk Officer is managing this project.

Evaluate Performance by using the new Values, Standards, and Expectations

To motivate behavior, supervisors must clearly communicate the performance objectives they expect from their subordinate officers and leaders. Our Chief of Human Capital is working an initiative we are calling the “Performance Evaluation Project,” which is designed to ensure the appropriate focus on desired mission outcomes is imbedded within Annual Performance Plans. These new standards will be used for the performance period that started on October 1, 2015.

Incentivize Performance to Enact Values, Standard, and Expectations

Several of our field leaders and officers have also recommended a *Model Transportation Security Officer Project* to determine model performance criteria. The project is intended to incentivize performance and emphasize the values and standards frontline employees are expected to uphold across the enterprise. I am a strong proponent of incentivizing performance, as this can be a powerful instrument to drive employee behaviors. Through these efforts, we intend to convey our values, measure them, and evaluate performance against these new

expectations, uniting the TSA workforce behind critical agency reforms that will deliver organizational alignment and strengthen our security posture.

Finally, we will continue to partner with the trade and travel industry, the airlines, and airport operators to identify solutions that can fundamentally alter the reality on the ground for our screening workforce.

A key element of our solution set will be reassessing the screening workforce staffing baseline. Budgeted staffing levels for FY16, planned more than a year in advance of the covert testing failures, presumed a significant increase in the vetted traveling population which, combined with managed inclusion, allowed for a smaller workforce. We are reassessing screener workforce staffing needs and planning additional adjustments to support training and operational enhancements, all to ensure future staffing reductions remain rational choices that balance effectiveness with efficiency. Additionally, we look forward to working with the Congress to identify means of adding additional field intelligence officers to ensure every field operation is supported with a dedicated intelligence officer to facilitate information sharing, and to expand our efforts at the TSA Academy to train the workforce. Finally, we expect to invest in Advanced Imaging Technology detection upgrades based on the OIG findings.

Mission Essentials Training

Given the importance of training to our mission, I would like to elaborate on TSA's approach to training following the OIG covert testing results. It is critical that we train out these failures so we do not repeat the mistakes, including those which could have catastrophic consequences. As of October 1st, we have trained the specifics of the failures to virtually every frontline member and leader of TSA.

This training, referred to as “Mission Essentials --Threat Mitigation,” builds our workforce understanding of the link among intelligence, technology and the procedures they perform. The training advances our new value proposition by (1) providing a detailed intelligence briefing on the current threat; (2) discussing passenger tactics and techniques that may be used to dissuade the TSOs from thoroughly performing their screening duties and what counter measures they can employ; (3) reviewing recent procedural changes for screening individuals who present themselves as having a disability; (4) practicing pat-down procedures with the goal of finding components of improvised explosive devices; and (5) exploring the capabilities and limitations of the checkpoint equipment and how the TSO can by following proper procedures. I have been encouraged to see our TSOs embracing the principles of Mission Essentials training.

Through this training, our employees are being taught how to respond to social engineering – techniques used by passengers seeking to manipulate our screening workforce and avoid regular processes. As I meet with these employees in my travels to airports throughout the country, I have heard repeatedly that they wished they had this valuable information. As such, I have charged TSA’s senior leaders to plan to send all new-hire TSOs to the TSA Academy at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, GA, for TSO-basic training beginning in January 2016. Most of our major counterterrorism partners in security and law enforcement send their employees through similar type academies to ensure a laser-focus on mission, and we should as well. We recognize this initiative may require additional resources, and look forward to working with the Committee accordingly.

Future of Screening

As we envision the future of screening, even in the context of the current challenges, I remain a strong proponent of a risk-based approach to security. The vast majority of people, goods and services moving through our transportation systems are legitimate and pose minimal risk. To support our risk-based approach, it is critical to continue growing the population of fully vetted travelers, such as those participating in TSA Pre✓® or in other DHS trusted traveler programs. In parallel, I am also reviewing expedited screening concepts with the intent of moving away from unvetted travelers. This multi-pronged, risk-based approach will result in separating known and unknown travelers, with known travelers receiving expedited screening and other travelers, some high threat, receiving more extensive screening.

I envision a future where some known travelers will be as vetted and trusted as flight crews. Technology on the horizon may support passengers becoming their own “boarding passes” by using biometrics, such as fingerprint scans, to verify identities linked to Secure Flight. The Credential Authentication Technology (CAT) is the first step in this process and will provide TSOs with real-time authentication of a passenger’s identity credentials and travel itinerary.

A second objective is to screen at the “speed of life” with an integrated screening system that combines metal detection, non-metallic anomaly detection, shoe x-ray, and explosive vapor detection. Prototypes of these machines exist, which hold great promise for the traveling public.

Purposeful checkpoint and airport designs that facilitate screening advances are also a future approach. At Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) Tom Bradley International Terminal, recent innovative renovations have been completed so that screening operations are seamlessly integrated into the movement and flow of the traveling public. This effort will continue, with six out of eight terminals at LAX scheduled for design and renovation. Other locations, such as Dulles International Airport (IAD), have dedicated checkpoints that separate

expedited screening from other operations, allowing TSOs to follow the appropriate concepts of operations with greater focus and clarity.

While some airports may not be able to take the same approach, the future of screening is based on fulfilling the promise of risk-based security. By increasing the number of fully vetted passengers and enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of physical screening, I am committed to refining and advancing our risk-based security strategy. I look forward to working with this Committee and the Congress to chart a way forward in this regard.

Conclusion

Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Rice, we have an incredible challenge ahead of us. Still, I know TSA is up to the task, and will adjust its focus from one based on speed and efficiency to one based on security effectiveness. We are on the frontlines of a critical counterterrorism fight and our workforce is willing and able to do the job. I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and sincerely appreciate your time and attention. I look forward to your questions.